

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAE #0787/01 2720907  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 290907Z SEP 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8444  
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 5972  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1211  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1386  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0145  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4639  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0206  
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 0226  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1031  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0342  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHMFISS/CJTf HOA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000787

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS  
STATE FOR USAID/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EASTERN FRONT: SEEKING U.S.  
ASSISTANCE

REF: ASMARA 757

Classified By: AMB Scott H. DeLisi, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: On September 22, Poloff met with the three Eastern Front leaders, Dr. Amna Dirar, Musa Muhammed Ahmed and Salim Al-Mabrouk, to discuss the progress of their GSE-mediated negotiations with the GNU. A final agreement is reportedly close. Concerns about implementation are now becoming more important and the eastern leaders are pressing for a greater USG role. Although we will welcome a negotiated settlement of differences between the EF and GNU we remain leery of EF requests that we witness formally an agreement whose shaping has been less than transparent and in which we have not played a role. We do believe, however, that there may be opportunities to support efforts to implement the agreement and that it would be in our overall interest to do so. End Summary.

#### THE EASTERN FRONT RELATIVELY CONTENT

-----

12. (C) In a conversation with the three EF leaders, Mabrouk was the most outspoken, noting at length how happy he was with what we have achieved. He believes that the EF discussions were much better handled than those in Abuja and, when taken collectively with Naivasha and Abuja, the Sudanese rebel groups had succeeded in splitting-up the NCP by forcing them to negotiate. When pressed by PolOff to clarify this point, Mabrouk merely repeated his statement and offered no further explanation.

13. (C) Mabrouk said he was pleased with the military and security negotiating committees, work, emphasizing how important military integration is for the Eastern Front. Regarding the thorny issue of whether to create one state of the eastern region the three leaders acknowledged differences of opinion with the GNU and said that the Eastern Front will see what the GNU will offer. Dr. Dirar noted that they anticipate the GNU will refuse to negotiate on this point but the Eastern Front will continue to fight for one state, through elections and political

activities<sup>8</sup> if necessary. Overall, the Eastern Front leaders agreed that getting the GNU to the negotiating table was a success in itself and marks a beginning, not an end.

¶4. (C) In a sidebar conversation with Dr. Dirar, Poloff found her more upbeat than in previous conversations of the past few weeks and optimistic that an agreement will be signed. By far the best English speaker and the most educated of the three Eastern Front leaders, Dr. Dirar often provides the most realistic perspective of what is happening during the negotiations. When asked about the previously reported move by the Eastern Front away from direct negotiations with the GNU, Dr. Dirar explained &sometimes you need to use indirect means.<sup>8</sup> She added that the GSE mediator forced the issue with the result that both sides would sit across the table from each other that afternoon for the first time in 10 days. She also commented that the Eastern Front supports the idea of a nationwide conference to be held by the GNU to address power-sharing in light of what will be three peace agreements ) CPA, DPA and the anticipated agreement with the Eastern Front.

#### AND APPEALS FOR GREATER U.S. ROLE

-----

¶5. (C) All three leaders commented on what they characterized as limited U.S. support for the Eastern Front in the past and during the negotiations. All expressed interest in having America play a greater role in assisting the Eastern Front, including having the U.S. formally witness the agreement, preferably as a signatory. Mabrouk commented, &(we did) this without the support of America, but we are now ready to have (America,s) participation.<sup>8</sup> (Comment: The

Norwegians, who have been far more directly involved in support of the EF negotiation effort have not/not so far been asked by the EF to be a signatory. End Comment.)

¶6. (C) Poloff inquired what the Eastern Front needs to move forward. First and foremost, the leaders emphasized the importance of continued food aid in the East, including assistance to the transient population that frequently crosses the border from Eastern Sudan into Eritrea. Secondly, the Eastern Front needs support and assistance in transitioning from a military movement to a political entity, and require funding for training of their cadres in the following areas: building a party structure, financial and administrative functions, good governance, and media operations. Thirdly, the Eastern Front needs operational and logistical support, including money for running offices, buying furniture and paying for transportation. Finally, all three agreed that the development fund as proposed by the GNU will need both international financial augmentation and the support of development partners.

#### COMMENT

-----

¶7. (C) In marked contrast to reftel comments from various expat Eastern Front advisors, the three EF leaders presented a united front to Poloff. Although we believe that tensions do exist between the three given their distinctly different styles, backgrounds and education levels, those tensions are unlikely to preclude the conclusion of an agreement in the current negotiating round. However, although the signing of an agreement seems imminent, there are still many questions about how implementation will proceed. The unconfirmed allegations that Mabrouk and Musa may have been bought off by the GNU continue to raise concerns that the EF negotiations may have made concessions that undercut the viability and legitimacy of the pending agreement. Nonetheless, despite these undercurrents, we believe that an agreement will be signed and could provide the basis for measured progress in eastern Sudan and improved GNU-EF ties.

¶8. (C) Post would, along with the diplomatic community, certainly attend any signing ceremony. However, we would not recommend a formal role as a &witness<sup>8</sup> even if asked by all

the parties ) and we doubt such a request will be forthcoming from either the GNU or the GSE mediator. We do, however, believe that any support we can offer to the implementation process, including through capacity building training for the EF and possible assistance on the food aid issue, is worth examining carefully. End Comment.  
DELISI